

Visualization—Scott Lee

OK George, you are a radical man with inventive ideas. I know of no research or anecdotal evidence wherein visualization has been used to help teach calculus. But then again all good storytelling is visualization, recreating an experience in the right brain to teach a left-brain concept. I think this could be helpful to 1) get their attention, 2) help the student relax about an otherwise difficult subject, and 3) create an image to conceptualize rather than just a formula (the line tangential to the circle vs. "f of x").

Some more thoughts:

--There is an optimum amount of anxiety to utilize to best teach, so the idea of no anxiety does not always lead to better teaching.

--Any behavior which is utilized regularly will habituate and lose its initial effect, so regular visualization may build up a certain "immunity."

--The effect of the visualization which I did with you was dependent on me pacing the audience, moving at the same speed as the audience moved and then leading just ahead. When you can not see the audience, it may be much more difficult to "pace" the audience and therefore lower the efficacious use of the visualization.

This visualization was not memorized, and there is no script (although there is a recording available from the conference. It is fairly straightforward, but is utilizing the immediate experience of the audience member to facilitate the relaxation (ie: as your mind travels throughout your body you may become aware of where your leg presses against the chair and where it does not touch...). I believe that a visualization that relates well to the audience is the key, so a different image might be better for a high school audience. I would ask the high schoolers what their favorite images are, their most enjoyable experiences, and then, after picking carefully, I would help recreate an image with as much sensory data as I could. The trick is not to create something inviting separate from the audience but to recreate the audiences own experiences whenever possible.

Good luck! I would do some more research before utilizing these techniques because you will get flack from the parents. So what...if we don't try a new fly every once in a while, you may never know there was a 4 lb Rainbow lurking under the next rock...

Scott